

# Sickle Beta Plus Thalassemia (S $\beta$ <sup>+</sup>-Thalassemia)

### What is S $\beta$ <sup>+</sup>-Thalassemia?

Sickle Beta Plus Thalassemia (S $\beta$ <sup>+</sup> thalassemia) is a “mild” form of sickle cell disease. Your child’s red blood cells have only a small amount of the normal hemoglobin called hemoglobin A. They also have abnormal hemoglobin called hemoglobin S (sickle hemoglobin). The red blood cells have another problem called beta plus thalassemia. This causes red blood cells to be small and pale.

### What Causes S $\beta$ <sup>+</sup>-Thalassemia?

S $\beta$ <sup>+</sup> thalassemia is an inherited condition. Hemoglobin S comes from one parent. Beta plus thalassemia comes from the other parent. Instead of appearing round (like donuts), your child’s red blood cells are somewhat small, pale and misshapen.

### What Symptoms or Problems Occur with S $\beta$ <sup>+</sup>-Thalassemia?

*(Symptoms are something out of the ordinary that a parent notices.)*

Periods of pain can happen with S $\beta$ <sup>+</sup> thalassemia. The red blood cells are rigid and stiff. Sometimes they “clog up” the small blood vessels in the bones and other parts of the body. This can cause pain because not enough oxygen can get into the bones and other parts of the body. The pain usually happens in the back, stomach, arms, and legs. There may be swelling. The pain can last for a few hours or up to a week or more. The amount of pain varies. Sometimes children with S $\beta$ <sup>+</sup> thalassemia have a slightly enlarged spleen (an organ located on the upper left side of the stomach area). A bigger spleen usually doesn’t cause any problems.

### What is the Treatment for S $\beta$ <sup>+</sup>-Thalassemia?

**Medication** – There are medicines to help ease the pain. Taking medication such as acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil) usually helps the pain.

**Fluids** – Your child has more risk of getting infections, especially pneumonia. The abnormal red blood cells “clog up” the lungs. This increases the risk of infection there. Your child will need to drink plenty of fluids to keep blood vessels open.

### Things to Remember

Children with S $\beta$ <sup>+</sup>-thalassemia can have normal lives and life spans. Don’t think of your child as “sick.” You should treat him or her normally. Your child will need to see the doctor for regular checkups and vaccinations. He or she will also need to make several visits a year to see a hematologist (a doctor who is a blood specialist).